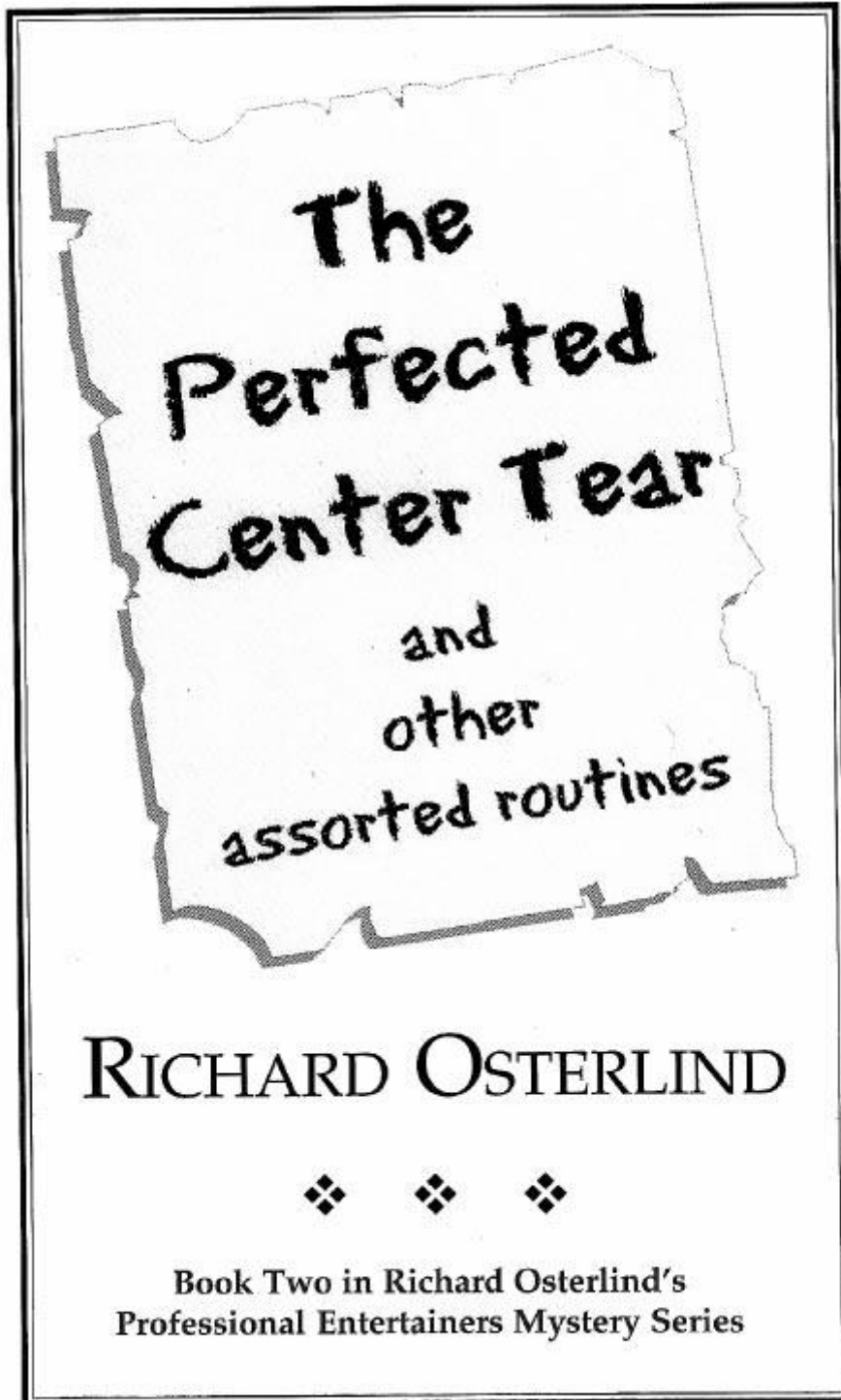


PART FOUR

Weird Ones



THE PERFECTED CENTER TEAR

and other assorted routines



Richard Osterlind

Osterlind
MYSTERIES
www.osterlindmysteries.com

CONTENTS

Part One: The Perfect Center Tear	7
Introduction	9
Background	9
The Paper	10
The Mechanics	11
The Presentation	18
 Part Two: The Nail Writer	23
Guess Your Birthday	26
Inside the Fold	28
Dice Foretold	29
 Part Three: On Billets	31
The Natural Billet Switch	33
On Annemann and Bert Reese	35
 Part Four: Weird Ones	39
Ashes on the Arm	41
The Incredible Lighter	43
Penomenonally	44
Osterlind Coin Snatch	48
Memory Loss	50
A Very Weird Bonus	55
Erratum	55
 Bonus Section: The Ultimate Center Tear	59
Preface	61
The Ultimate Center Tear	61

PART ONE

The Perfected Center Tear

INTRODUCTION

It has been 17 years since the publication of *The Surrounded Slow Motion Center Tear*. As you can imagine, the method has gone through many changes. Along with my *Breakthrough Card System*, this has become my most used and valuable routine. The thousands of pads I have torn up are a small testament to the number of times I have performed it. If you make the effort to learn and practice this center tear, you will see how strong it plays. This is mind reading, pure and simple. It is what an audience expects of you when they learn you are a mentalist!

BACKGROUND

The history of the center tear is fascinating and mysterious. To this day, no one can be sure who invented it. In all fairness, it could have been one of those discoveries that a number of people came upon independently. The late Al Mann, who was one of my very closest friends, wrote of its history in a number of publications. He began in *Mental-ettes* and later expanded his research in *The Tesseract* and *The Apodosis*. If you are lucky enough to possess his last work, *The Purloined Thought*, you can find all his research there. Another resource to find information is Bart Whaley's *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Magic 1584-1988*.

Al and I were both enamored of the "tear and read" concept whereby the vital information is sighted during the tearing process. This method was originally developed by Al Baker and it is a bit amusing to see one present day "inventor" claiming *that* classic method as his own!

Al worked out a certain paper handling to help with the Baker method while I invented a totally different way to accomplish the read. This routine, *Richard Osterlind's Ultimate Center Tear*, was my first center tear offering to the magic fraternity. It was enthusiastically received and is re-

printed here in this manuscript as an added bonus. Its significance and applications will be covered in that section.

Finally we come to my *Surrounded Slow Motion Center Tear*. At the time of its publication, I had already been using it for a number of years. The original method utilized a colored square of paper approximately 3 by 3 inches in size. These were, and still are, available in stationary departments in clear, plastic containers used for note taking. The original method involved folding the paper before each tear and the information appeared on its side. Also, the first tear was not really made in the middle of the paper.

Over the years, I started using paper pads that were approximately 2.5 by 3.5 inches. In addition to looking more natural, this allowed each tear to be exactly in the center of the paper. I also changed the method whereby the paper was not pre-folded before each tear.

The last development was a change so that the information appears right side up each and every time. This final method is the one that I have settled upon as my preferred one.

THE PAPER

It is vital to understand that the final version of my center tear will work with any type of paper. I have performed it on airlines, tearing out a part of a flight magazine, in business offices using a pink "while you were out" form, at a hotel desk using part of an available envelope, etc.

The only necessary requirement is that the paper you use should be fairly opaque. This does not mean that you cannot be prepared. Audiences expect you to have what you need to do your act. I now carry with me a pad approximately 2.5 by 3.5 inches. I have my printer make these up for me out of fairly thick paper. I make sure that the grain of the paper runs vertically in the pad. In actuality, that is the normal way pads are made.

Let me explain what I mean when I say the "grain" of paper. Take any square of paper and fold it in each direction. You will find that it will bend easily one way while you will feel resistance the other way. The "easy way" is with the grain while the "harder way" is against it. This subtlety is used in the ancient, but wonderful trick, "Telecolor Cards."

The direction of the grain is important because of the tearing process. If you tear against the grain you will get a ragged tear. If you tear with the grain, you will get a smooth tear. There are times in the routine you will need each of these attributes.

The grain will be positioned automatically if you have a pad like the one I described. A standard scratch pad sized 3 X 5 inches should automatically work. If you are forced to use a piece of paper lying around, bend the paper in each direction to find which way the grain is running. You must make the first fold against the grain.

I will describe the mechanics of the method first and then the presentation. In the description, I will explain the moves using the paper that I personally use. You can later adapt them to fit your own paper.

THE MECHANICS

Take the paper and fold it in half the long way. Draw a line and *print* the spectator's first name on the outside top edge as shown (Figure 1). Now open the paper and draw a horizontal line slightly below center on the inside. This is where the spectator will print a name and then refold the paper in half (Figure 2).

For years, mentalists have

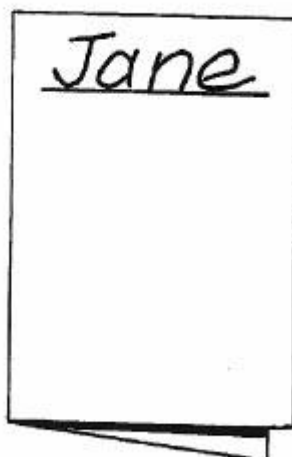


Figure 1

been using a circle to try to keep all the vital information within the proper area. Please try this routine out by just drawing a line as suggested. You will find that the line alone will do the job adequately. Anyone who might have any previous experience or knowledge of the original center tear will not be lead to it before you even begin!

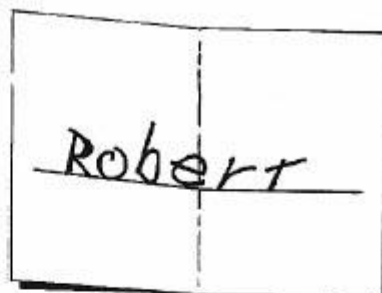


Figure 2

Take the folded paper and hold it at your left fingers with the folded edge on top and the spectator's name facing him. Using your right fingers, apparently fold the right side of the paper in half towards you. In reality, only crease the top half of this fold (Figure 3). The right fingers will hide the fact that the bottom of the fold is not creased.

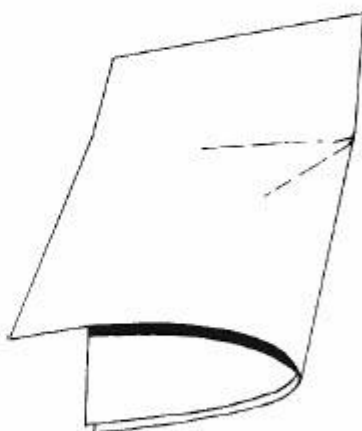


Figure 3

Tear the paper in half down the middle using the right hand to tear the paper towards you (Figure 4). Swivel the hands away from each other and lay the right hand piece on the left (Figure 5). Notice that the bottom edge of the uncreased paper can be slid under your left thumb. As the right hand releases its piece, the rest of that paper will pop open. The right fingers immediately regrasp the paper on its right side (Figure 6). This maneuver has now opened the section of the paper with the hidden writing to just one fold. (It is impor-

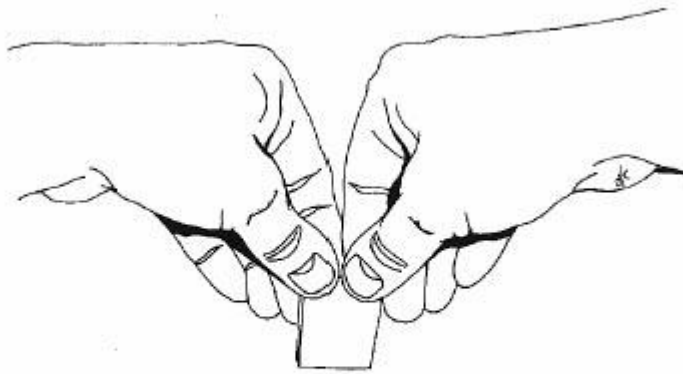


Figure 4

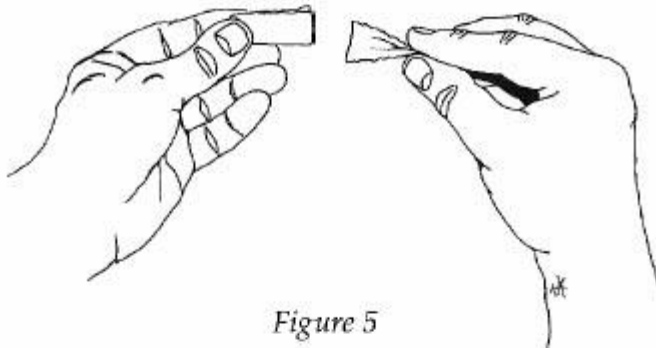


Figure 5

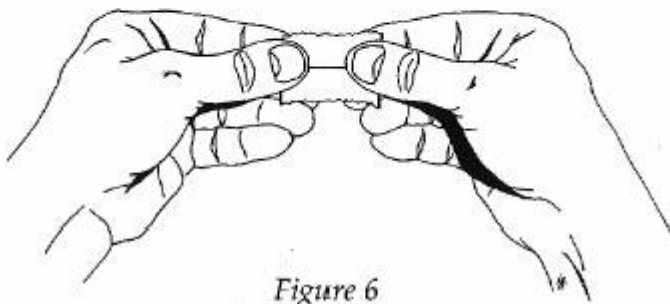


Figure 6

tant to understand that since the original fold of the paper was against the grain, this first tear will be with the grain and will therefore be a clean, even tear.)

Immediately tear the paper in half again using the same motions as the first tear (Figure 7). Place the left-hand pieces in front of the right hand pieces and grasp all with your right thumb and forefinger at the upper right corner (Figure 8). Keep the left fingers in place, however, even though they are not actually holding the paper.

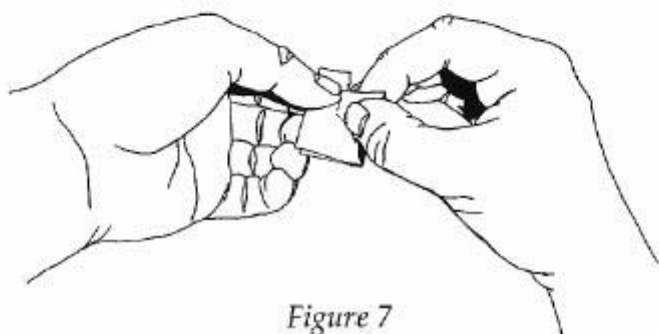
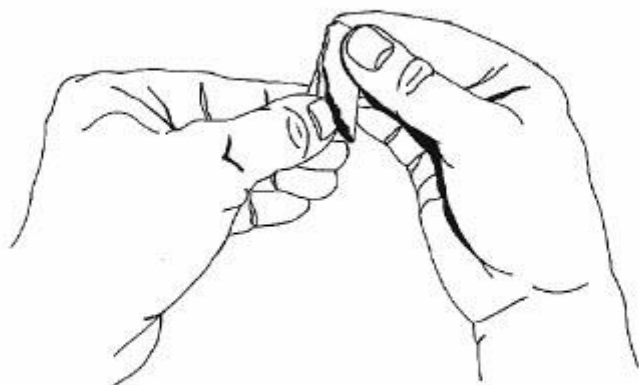


Figure 7

You are now going to slide your left thumb into the opening shown in the illustration (Figure 9). Two things will assist this move and completely hide it. First, because the second tear is made against the grain, the tear will be uneven and the edges of the paper will be ragged and overlap. The left thumb can thus use the overlap to slide open the paper. Second, if you slide your right thumb upwards and your

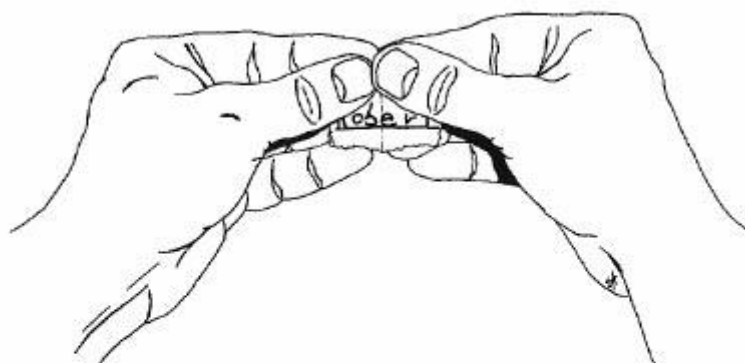


Figure 8

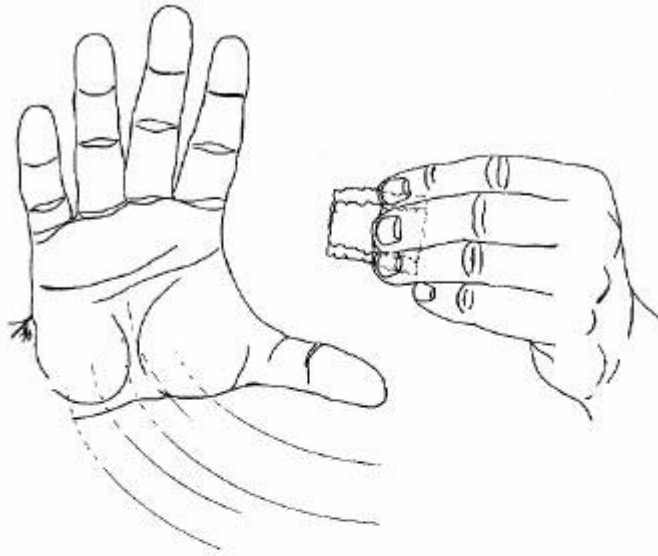
*Figure 9*

forefinger downwards, the opening will bevel open. It is now an easy matter to take the pieces into your left hand while sliding your left thumb into the opening.

Let me jump ahead. The goal is to get to the position

*Figure 10*

where the vital folded piece is opened and held as shown (Figure 10). There are two ways to accomplish this. Since the right and left fingers are screening the paper after the last tear, the paper can be popped open with the left thumb

*Figure 11*

after the left fingers take hold. This is the first and simple way. Another method is to remove the right hand and gesture with it leaving the center still folded, but with the left thumb inside the paper. That hand can be swiveled slightly downwards and inwards to hide the thumb in the opening (Figure 11).

After the gesture, the right hand comes back and the center is popped open as the right fingers return to the pieces. I use both methods and they are equally effective.

You are going to sight the hidden writing during the next tear. It is natural to look down at your hands as you begin the tear and that is when you see the information. The opened center is completely hidden from all other directions by your fingers. Even someone standing behind you won't be able to see the writing if you position your hands correctly. You, however, will have a "tunnel of vision" to the writing that only you can see.

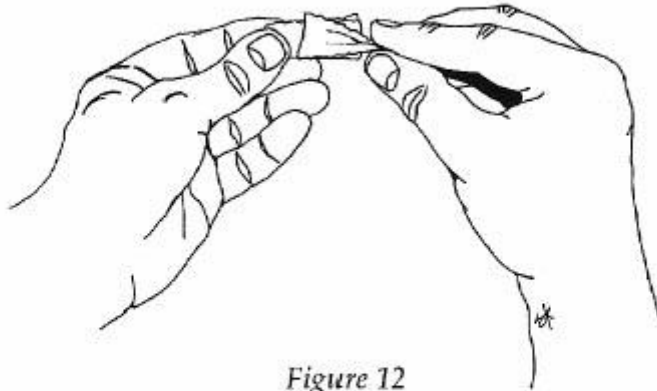
After you see the writing, apparently tear the papers in

half again. Really, you are just tearing the right half of the center section, but you will appear to be tearing all the pieces. Again tear towards yourself. As soon as the tear is made, place the right hand piece onto the left-hand pieces, turning it over as you do so. This will place all the writing on the inside of the paper and you are now clean. Finally give all the pieces one last tear in half and hand the pieces to the spectator.

The above process may seem a bit complicated, but once you have mastered it, it will become second nature. You can do the move right under the scrutiny of the audience without worry because every sequence is perfectly covered and there is nothing out of the ordinary. Every move is exactly what you would do if you were simply tearing up the paper. There is simply nothing to see from *any* angle. Please believe me when I tell you I have been performing this tear exactly as described for years. I constantly break one of magic's golden rules by repeating this tear over and over again for the same people! You can do so because it is so clean and perfect. That is the test of really great magic!

Here is one last addendum. Once in a blue moon you will get someone who will fold the paper a second or even a third time. There are different ways to handle each situation. If the spectator folds the paper a second time and his name is on the outside (as it should be), make the first tear. As you place the pieces together, push the folded edge of the right hand piece onto the left-hand piece, causing it to spring open (Figure 12). Continue with the tear in the normal way. If he folds the paper with his name on the inside, or folds it three or four times, simply take it back, carefully open it out to one fold and refold it so that you can do the tear. As you do this, explain that you want his name visible on the outside of the paper so that all can see that it's *his* paper that you are tearing.

This is a very important part of the tear and needs to be elaborated on. By writing the person's name on the outside of the paper when you begin, you are signifying that you are not switching the paper for a different one. Having

*Figure 12*

performed the center tear for so many years, I can guarantee you that this is one of the main solutions spectators have for this type of billet work.

You can either do the tear without saying anything, or point out verbally the paper has his name on it to prove you are truly ripping his paper. I normally only say something if I think I have a smart spectator on my hands or if the paper has been folded more than once.

THE PRESENTATION

You can, of course, use any presentation you like when performing *The Osterlind Center Tear*. By giving you my routine, I can demonstrate my logic and reasoning for every aspect of the effect. Once you understand all the thinking involved, you can use the routine as is or change it to suit your own needs. I shall describe it as though you were performing it.

This routine is great as an "opener" when you first meet someone. Let's suppose her name is Jane. Remove the pad and pen and say, "Jane, I'd like to try a simple test with you. I am going to write your name on this piece of paper."

Here you write "Jane" on the outside of the paper as per the first illustration. Continuing, you say, "As you can see, this paper is very thick and you cannot see through it." At this point, draw the line on the inside of the paper. "What I would like you to do is think of someone who is close to you. Someone who you see often, but is not here now."

Notice how this line of instruction will prevent someone from writing the name of a deceased person, which might become distasteful.

"Have you got someone in mind? OK." Hand her the open paper, laying it on top of the pad along with the pen. Turn your back and say, "Print the person's first name, just like the way I printed yours on the other side, right here on top of the line. When you are through, close up the paper. *Do not* let anyone else see what you are writing."

There are some very subtle points about these instructions. First, notice how she is instructed to *print* the name the same way you printed her name on the outside of the paper. This implies to do it about the same size and right on top of the line. Second, by instructing her to not show anyone else what she is writing, you have set yourself up for a very important piece of stage management. You will find that all the other spectators will back away from her so as not to see. This gives you a bit of "stage" room around her and also gives you better angles to do the tear.

Next, asking her to simply "close up the paper" sounds much better than telling her to "refold" the paper. Finally, having her write on top of the pad is a red herring. Some may think the pad is an impression device of some sort. That is fine. You will disprove that in a moment and gain some valuable misdirection at the same time.

Ask her to tell you when she is finished. When she does, turn around and say; "Hand me the paper. You keep the pad and pen." Hold the paper at the tips of your right fingers and look into space. Say, "Is this person a relative or just a close friend?" Regardless of the answer, bring the hands together and make the first tear. "I'm going to rip up the paper so no one can see the name." Make the sec-

ond tear as you say, "It helps me to touch the paper, but one thing I won't touch is the pad. Some people think there may be a mark on it!" As you say that line, you get your left thumb into the fold as your right hand moves away and points at the pad. You will find that most spectators will look in the direction of the pad and attention on you will let down for a second. Those who were possibly thinking the trick is in the pad will be deflated! In addition to the red herring, you set yourself up for the peek. As you bring your right hand back to the left hand, you pop open the paper behind the right fingers.

Now, as you make the final two tears, you sight the name. Depending on whether the person is a relative and what the name is, you do a bit of fishing. For instance, if it is a relative and the name is Brittany, you can be fairly sure it is a younger person, possibly her daughter. On the other hand, if the name is something like Estelle, there is a good chance it is an older person like her mother or an aunt. Names come and go into fashion and you should be aware of what names are in vogue. Sometimes the name will be neutral and you just have to fish a bit more.

This subject of names could be a whole book in itself (I may write one someday!) As mentioned, certain names are in vogue for younger people. As I write this, Brittany, Megan, Brian, Jennifer, Christina, Cheryl, Daryl, Kimberly, Ryan, Jacob, etc. are common names for children. Dorothy, Theresa, Harold, Martin, etc. are "older" names. Some names like Ann or Anna were popular first names years ago and now are popular middle names. Some names such as John, Peter, Mark, Ruth, Rachel, etc. are popular biblical names and often such names go together as brothers and sisters. I am only touching the tip of the iceberg here, but a study of names is worth investigating.

In his book, *Paramiracles*, my very good friend, Ted Lesley, has a chapter called "Dissertation of the Center Tear." When I first read it, I was fascinated to see how "hand in hand" his advice was with mine. Many of the very same principles I have just outlined, such as advice about names,

are discussed and expanded in his book. I highly recommend *Paramiracles* for the wealth of practical knowledge it contains.

As you are talking, you ask the person to hold out their hand and you place the pieces into it. Make sure you look away as you do this to reinforce the idea that you don't want to get any kind of glimpse of the pieces. Take her hand in yours and ask her to concentrate. Say something like, "Imagine in your mind that this person is here. Imagine you are going to introduce him/her to me. You would say, 'I'd like you to meet my daughter...(pause)... Brittany!'" You end, of course, based on what you have figured out before this.

So there it is. This is the routine I have been making my living with for years. People who have seen me do it will tell you that what I have given you is *exactly* what I do time and time again. Nothing has been held back. I wish you well with it.

I would like to end this section by giving you another presentational idea I call "fishing after you already have a whale on the hook!" Let me explain what I mean. In this routine, you get the name the person wrote down early in the routine. *This is the time to fish!* You know you have a great ending and will stagger the person when you announce the name. So now you can take a few chances. You can try to guess the approximate age of the person. You can guess what the relationship is. Maybe you might want to go for the color of the hair or eyes. You might even try to describe what the person looks like in general terms. Why? Because if you do hit, you have gone far beyond the name they wrote down and will have a miracle on your hands. If you don't hit, or only hit some, you still end with a great climax. So, make the most of it while you have the opportunity.

BONUS IDEA: I want to let you in on a little secret I have often used and is an alternative to the above presentation. Instead of having the spectator write the name of someone

not present, have him or her write down someone who is, or else the name of some object in the room. Perform the tear as outlined and hand the person the pieces.

Now take their hand with the torn paper and go into a muscle reading routine! Handing them the pieces is perfectly logical if you do this. Since you know the written item, you will be lead to the right person and know his name to boot! If it is an object and there is more than one of them in the room, you will find the right one. This is a great way to hone your skills as a muscle reader. Check out Banachek's book, *Psychophysiological Thought Reading* and Sartori's *Making Contact* for modern contemporary works on learning the art of contact mindreading.



PART TWO

The Nail Writer

I do a lot of work with a nail writer. I am not going to write a treatise here, but I want to give you a few ideas that blend in with the center tear. The first idea is one of the most valuable you will ever find.

For years, people have been trying to develop the perfect ink nail writer without great success. I suppose the reasoning is that most people write with pens and to use a pencil seems out of the ordinary. I'm not sure I totally agree with that, but I do have another reason for using a pen. With a ballpoint pen, it is nearly impossible to write lightly. When performing my center tear, I don't want to take a chance that someone will write so lightly that it will be impossible to read even when I can see it!

A black ballpoint pen solves that problem permanently (excuse the pun). In addition to making sure the writing is dark, it is almost impossible to write real small with a medium-tipped, ballpoint pen. So then, how do you write with a pen most of the time and then use a pencil for a nail writer effect without arousing suspicion? Here's how.

I always carry a Cross brand pen and pencil set. You can get a inexpensive set in chrome or spend a few dollars more for a nice gold set. Besides giving a classy look to your show, it has another advantage. The writing of the new thin leads used in modern mechanical pencils is almost indistinguishable from that of a black ballpoint pen. In addition, the Cross pen and pencil are almost identical in appearance (a black dot at the end of the pen lets you take out the right one from your pocket.) They both also operate the same way. If you are using the pen for most of your effects and then take out the pencil, not one person in a hundred will notice. Even if they did, many people carry such a set and it is nothing unusual.

The next step is to get the right kind of nail writer. I use the Sam Dalal type, which is very inexpensive. These are quite big and stable, but, more importantly, they hold a full-sized pencil lead. I take a new lead pencil and cut off about a half-inch from the sharpened end. Then I trim off the wood. The remaining piece of lead is inserted into the

nail writer. Since this lead is so sharp at the end, it matches the writing of the thin Cross mechanical pencil perfectly! It will work for quite awhile before it wears down and becomes too thick. When it does, a simple nail file will make things right again. When it finally gets too short, you must replace it with a new lead.

Take my word for it, I use it all the time and only have to replace the lead every few weeks. So now you have all the advantages of an ink nail writer without having to have an ink nail writer.

Many mentalists have asked me where I keep my nail writer. It is in my right pants pocket. I don't have any hold-outs or pencils with slots in them or magnets or any other nonsense. I just keep the nail writer loose in the bottom of my pocket. To get it on, I just drop my hand casually into the pocket and put it on as I talk. To make the move, just clip the pencil point between the tips of your first and second fingers and slide your thumbnail into the gimmick. The larger size of the Dalal nail writer makes this easy.

Magicians who have seen me do this at my lectures were amazed that I could do it so quickly. I was amazed that they were amazed! It is not hard and is sure worth the little work to master it. Think of the time some people spend on difficult card moves. This will serve you better than any ten double lifts.

Let me give you an effect I use all the time.

GUESS YOUR BIRTHDAY

This routine is great after doing the center tear routine. I use it all the time. Remove the *pencil* from your pocket along with the pad. You should have your nail writer on and hidden behind the pad you are holding.

Say to the person, "I'd like to try a test with you. I know this will sound like a strange question, but please bear with me. Would you say your birthday comes more towards the end of the year or the beginning?" Based on what the an-

swer is, you can get pretty close, if not hit exactly, on what the month is! It depends on what and how the person answers. If he should immediately say, "Towards the beginning" with no hesitation, you can be pretty sure it is January or February. Say, "Really near the beginning ... like January or February?" Then you take a 50/50 guess. If you are right, great. If not, say, "January? I was going to say that first and changed my mind." Either way you look good.

The same principle works with the end of the year for November or December. Again, if they answer "near the end" without any hesitation, you will have a pretty good shot at it.

The middle months are even easier. For instance, if they look confused and say, "Well, in the middle, actually," you respond by saying, "Well, is it a little more towards the beginning or towards the end?" Their answer will tell you June or July every time. So that takes care of half the months! The other six you will have to feel out. The amount of hesitation and the way they respond will lead you on in a sort of "verbal muscle reading" way. Trust me, after you do this for awhile, you will get the hang of it. It is advanced mentalism, but it is not hard. Soon you will be hitting 80% of the time.

Once in awhile, you will get a person who is just way off. He may say, "Near the beginning." Then, when you say "January or February," they say, "No." You keep guessing and finally say, "Well, what month is it?" and they say, "May." When that happens, you should just say, "That's near the beginning?" and make it a joke. Most of the other spectators will be on your side and will chastise the first person for not answering correctly. Either way, it doesn't matter even if you have to ask outright for the month. The ending is the important part. Here it is.

As soon as you get the month, write it down with the pencil and then pretend to write something else. Hand the pencil to the person you are working with and say, "What is the exact date? It's OK, tell me." Let's say they respond, "The 16th." Immediately nail write it in under the month

and say, "Look! I got it!" Turn over the pad and hand it to them immediately with your thumb underneath, hiding the nail writer. Watch the reaction.

What makes this a killer routine is when you do hit on the month. The misdirection is perfect in that case. Since you *told* them the month, they won't suspect you would use trickery on the date. When that happens, you will have people running around telling others you named their birthday! That is professional mentalism at the highest level. This routine is so much stronger than a lot of those I have seen on recent video tapes where, even though the method may seem clever by magicians' standards, the effect is hardly worth achieving.

INSIDE THE FOLD

This is a move that can be used in many routines. Take a piece of paper approximately the size for the center tear and fold it in half twice. Each fold is slightly offset, resulting in a slight step at each edge (Figure 13). These steps enable you to slide your thumb (with the nail writer on)

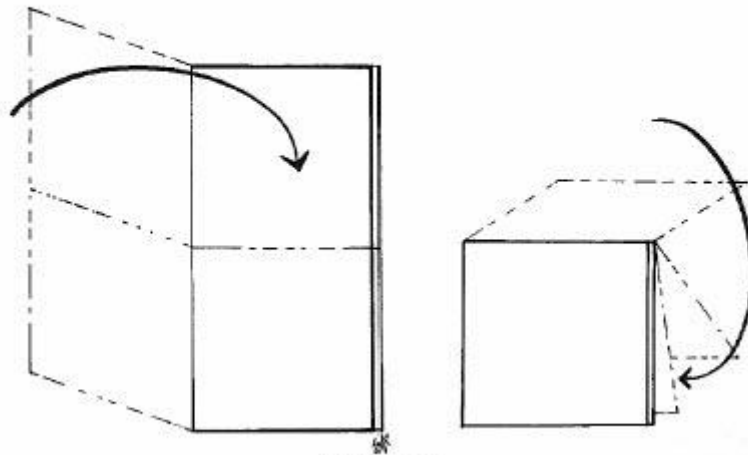


Figure 13

inside the paper (Figure 14). If you have a lead-up as in "Dice Foretold" (which follows), you simply have to fill in the prediction. When you hand the folded paper to an audience member to open, it is easy to keep the thumb with the gimmick on the bottom of the paper. Let me give you a great routine to use with this move.

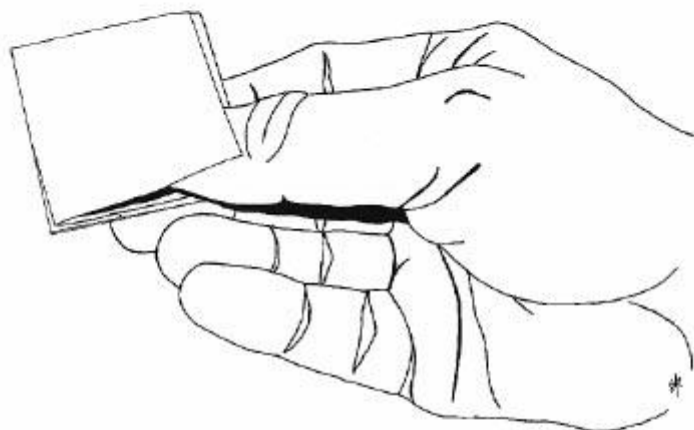


Figure 14

DICE FORETOLD

You will need two dice and two pieces of paper. Fold one paper as explained and write the lead-up to read, "I predict the total of your chosen roll will be ____." (See Figure 15.) Fold the paper and hand it to the spectator along with the pencil. Ask him to write any number between one and five on the outside of the slip. As he is doing this, casually drop your hand to your pocket and get the nail writer on.

Mention that the number is not a secret and take back the slip, but leave the pencil with the spectator. Have him number the other paper from one to five. Now either he or

another spectator picks up the dice and begins to roll them. The total of each roll is listed next to each of the five numbers. All you have to do is pay attention to what the roll is at his chosen number.

Let's say he wrote 3 on the paper and on the third roll, the number thrown was 8. You have all the time in the world to nail write in the number, drop your

hand casually to your side and ditch the gimmick while the rolling process and recording is still going on. In many instances, you will even have time to casually place the paper down onto the table. When he is finished, you explain how you tried to predict the roll on his chosen number. Let him open the paper and read your prediction!

This routine is a bit longer and protracted, but is perfect for intimate situations. All the moves have perfect misdirection and there is no reason to rush anything. Although it is a bit involved, when it is over, the impossibility of it will sink in. With a little thought, they will realize that there is no way the dice could be gimmicked and they had the pencil the whole time.

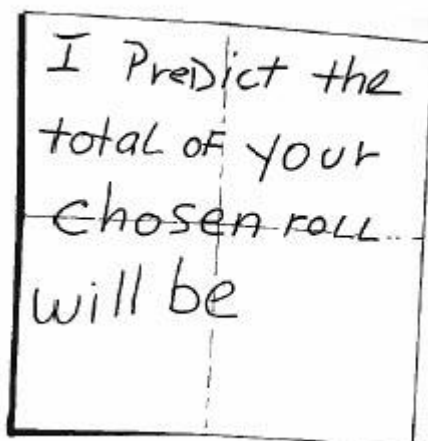


Figure 15



PART THREE

On Billets

THE NATURAL BILLET SWITCH

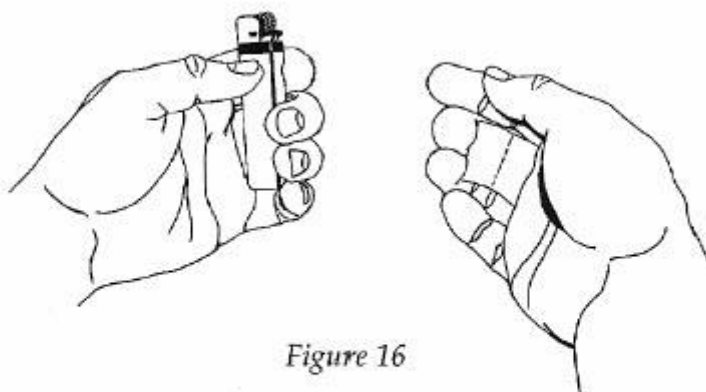
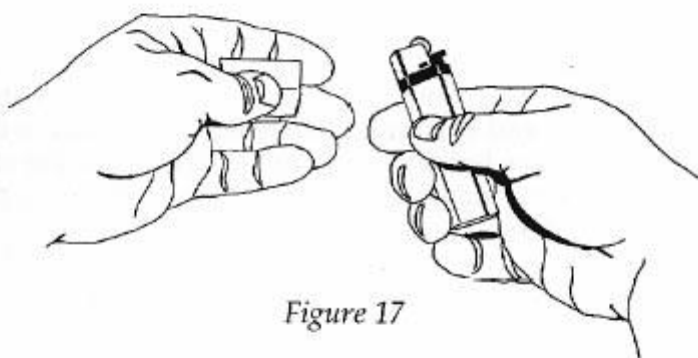
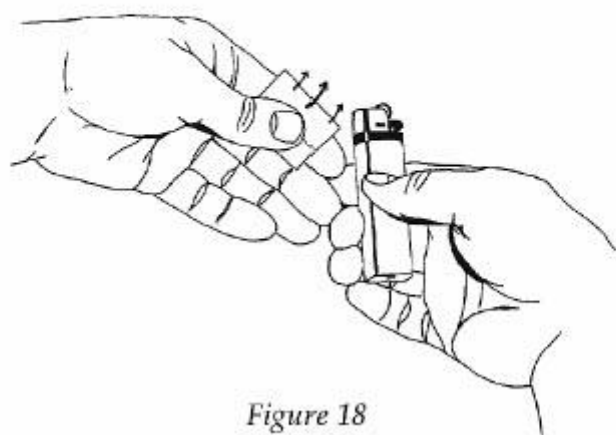
My original book, *The Surrounded Slow Motion Center Tear*, had a billet switching effect that drew a lot of attention. Since that book is so hard to come by, let me briefly explain it here.

A piece of paper about 2 inches square is given to an audience member to write down information. While he is busy doing that, reach into your left pocket and retrieve a "Bic" style disposable lighter. Hidden under the lighter is a duplicate folded slip like the one the spectator has.

When he is through writing, he folds the paper in half twice and drops it into your right hand. You immediately bring your left hand to your right and slide the lighter off the slip in that hand and onto the one in the right hand. (Figures 16, 17 and 18). Immediately light the paper in the left hand with the lighter and drop the lighter and the stolen slip into your right coat pocket. Drop the burning paper into an ashtray.

The move is instantaneous and imperceptible. The illusion that the paper is simply transferred from your right hand to your left as you light it is perfect. If you practice a bit with it, you will see that all the moves flow smoothly. As I said in my first book, if you were to really take a billet in your right hand and a lighter in your left, you would make exactly these moves to really light it. (Left-handers reverse the process, of course!) You can use other items besides a lighter to switch the papers, but a lighter gives the perfect reason to make the switch and destroys the evidence.

This switch is mainly for pre-show work. *You could do an entire mindreading act with this ruse alone!* Put a number of dummy slips into your left pocket along with the lighter. Go from table to table in a club (or approach people in the lobby before the show) and have them write down important information on their slip. Do the switch as outlined and pocket the stolen billet and lighter as you burn the

*Figure 16**Figure 17**Figure 18*

paper. After the paper is burned, tell the person that when you say the word "Fire!" he is to think of his thoughts. As you approach the next person, you simply remove the lighter from your right pocket and drop it into your left to reset. You need to do this to about five or six people.

Here is a new idea that was *not* in the original manuscript. These days, it is harder and harder to burn papers in public. With all the anti-smoking restrictions, almost nowhere are there ashtrays or receptacles to burn things in. So what do you do? Use flashpaper! Just cut up the paper into the right-sized pieces and use those. You can have a lot of fun with the volunteers and still get your results. Also, the flash attracts attention and others will approach you and want to know what is going on. You don't even have to ask for volunteers!

Backstage, you remove the slips and copy the information onto a pad. Later in the show, you pick up the pad and say the word "Fire!" Then begin to get the thoughts as you write on the pad and secretly read the information. The act takes on a very mysterious air as the audience wonders what kind of hypnotic or telepathic occurrence happened when you spoke the word. This is a gem of a mindreading routine that dispenses with clipboards and other props. All you need are some slips of paper and a lighter!

ON ANNEMANN AND BERT REESE (SOME THOUGHTS FOR PROFESSIONAL MENTALISTS)

My first book of mentalism was Annemann's *Practical Mental Effects*. I loved that book and was convinced that studying it would make me the world's greatest mentalist. There is an enormous amount of great material in it, but in all my years in the business, I have never seen anyone do the billet routines that so predominate the early chapters in the book. Annemann talks about Dr. Lynn, Foster and

Bert Reese making themselves world famous with their billet-switching abilities. I studied the switches for years, trying to make them look right and natural. Still, I always felt uneasy and self-conscious about doing them.

Just recently, I began to study these pages again in an attempt to make these wonderful tests workable to myself. I finally stumbled onto something that makes all the sense in the world to me and I want to pass it onto you. The secret, I believe, is in Annemann's description of Bert Reese's routine for three sitters. The written billets are on the table. Reese has the sitters pass the papers around to each other to hold. During one of these passes, Reese takes the billet and completes the six to eight inch journey and makes the switch. The deed is done.

Here is the question. How could you so rapidly switch the billet in that short amount of time and get away with it? In Annemann's description of the billet switch, one billet is palmed along the middle finger and another is taken at the tips of the fingers. The visible one is drawn back and the dummy is pushed forward into view. After months of practice in front of a mirror, I could never hide that move or the flash of one billet suddenly disappearing and the other reappearing. But suppose, instead, that when you took the real billet, you took it right on top of the palmed one and then immediately pushed forward the dummy? Do you see how instantaneous that would be? If you give it a try you will see there is no flash and the move looks totally natural.

To practice, take a folded billet and finger palm it in your left hand. You can fold it three times as Annemann and others have taught, or just twice which creates a bigger billet, but seems more natural. (If you were to fold a paper three times, would you really fold it like the Annemann fold?) If you only fold it twice, you will have to use two fingers to hide it instead of one. Now take another folded billet in the right hand. Take the paper with the left hand palm down. Reach right over the billet and place the folded one right on top of the visible one. Immediately push

the dummy forward. That's it. If you try it, you will see how natural it looks. Reverse hands and do it the other way. A very minor variation is to take the billet at the fingertips, but *immediately* draw it back on top of the dummy and then do the push out. Simple as this change is, I believe if you apply yourself to learning it, you may just start doing all those great effects that made those men famous.

